

# Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



California Department of Health Services  
Epidemiology and Prevention for Injury Control Branch  
State and Local Injury Control Section  
Bicycle Head Injury Prevention Program

# Dedication

To the children of California—  
for the joy and health that safe biking can bring to their lives

and

To the law enforcement and public health personnel  
working every day to make this possible.

March 2001

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Katrina Walsemann	University of Michigan, Ann Arbor School of Public Health
Eric Edpao	California State University, Sacramento Health and Safety Studies

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Freda Radich	Information Officer California Office of Traffic Safety


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Valodi Foster, M.P.H.  
Bicycle Head Injury Prevention Program Coordinator  
California Department of Health Services

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## Access/Contact Information

 The latest version is available by contacting [vfoster@dhs.ca.gov](mailto:vfoster@dhs.ca.gov)

 To share your experiences or offer ideas for the next version, contact

California Department of Health Services  
Epidemiology and Prevention for Injury Control (EPIC) Branch  
State and Local Injury Control (SLIC) Section  
611 North Seventh Street, Suite C  
Sacramento, CA 95814-0208  
(916) 323-3611  
[vfoster@dhs.ca.gov](mailto:vfoster@dhs.ca.gov)

 Adapting this manual for other states

While this Bicycle Media Outreach Kit was designed to assist projects in the State of California, it is easily adapted for other locations. Easy guidelines for adapting this document are from [vfoster@dhs.ca.gov](mailto:vfoster@dhs.ca.gov).

There is no charge for the use of these materials; attribution is appropriate.

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# Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



## Introduction

Bicycle helmets are the single most effective way to reduce the number of head injuries and fatalities due to bicycle crashes in California and the nation.

Bicycle helmets reduce the likelihood of serious brain injuries resulting from bicycle crashes by 85 percent. California is leading the nation with its forward-thinking public policies and programs aimed at protecting Californians against injury, disability and death from bicycle-related head injuries. The California bicycle helmet law and successful community efforts to increase helmet use are paying dividends. Moreover, biking is fun, good exercise and promotes good air quality.

As adults, we can contribute to the movement to protect our families as well as our community members by acting as role models. By discussing the importance of bicycle helmets with others as well as using bicycle helmets when we ride, we can do our part to save lives and prevent injuries, disabilities and deaths.

The California Department of Health Services developed this "Bicycle Media Outreach Kit" to:

- 🚲 assist community-based organizations, local health departments and law enforcement agencies in leading their communities to an increased awareness of head trauma caused by bicycle-related injuries
- 🚲 prevent head injuries through the promotion of bicycle helmets and bicycle-friendly communities

As of March 1, 1999, all bicycle helmets manufactured or imported for sale in the United States must meet Federal Safety Standards set by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). This standard ensures that new bike helmets will adequately protect the head and that chin straps will be strong enough to prevent the helmet from coming off in a crash, collision or fall.

It is imperative that we educate the public regarding the benefits of using a bicycle helmet and remind them that policies requiring helmet use have been developed because research has demonstrated the devastating disabilities and consequences of head injuries due to bicycle crashes. Furthermore, scientific evidence has shown that injuries can be reduced and lives can be saved through the use of bicycle helmets.

**A special note**

Note that the word "accident" is frequently used to describe bicycle-related events that often result in injuries to the bicycle rider. The injury prevention community promotes the use of the words "crash," "incident" or "collision" because the word "accident" implies that nothing could have been done to prevent this occurrence. We know that injuries do not result from random acts of fate. The causes of injuries are understandable, predictable and preventable. All bicycle safety advocates are encouraged to use the more accurately descriptive alternatives to the word "accident." Safe cycling among safe riders is the key!



# Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



## Media Outreach

Media outreach can be an extremely effective tool in bicycle helmet promotion and program implementation. Many states now have helmet laws and are looking forward to reductions in injury, disability and death similar to the reductions associated with safety belt use. In California, helmet use is required by law for riders under the age of 18. However, adults need to protect their heads, too!

If used effectively, print, radio and television can be excellent forums for educating the public on bicycle safety and helmet use. Media can also be an effective way to generate support for policy and behavior change by generating discussion about the benefits and barriers of bike safety and bicycle helmet use.

### **News Media**

These simple guidelines outline the criteria on how members of the media judge the value of news and how to keep the media as your friend instead of your foe.

### **Media Tips and Interview Tips**

These easy-to-follow tips can help you maximize the effectiveness of your media outreach.

### **Sample Pitch Letters**

These "fill-in-the-blank" pitch letters can help drive coverage of the benefits of bicycle helmet use and position your organization as a local resource for reporters working on related stories. Adapt this model letter for your local media by filling in the blanks. Adjust the information to meet your needs.

### **Sample Story Angles**

The story angles in this section can be discussed with a reporter or included

in a pitch letter.

### **Sample Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)**

Op-Ed articles on the opinion pages of local newspapers are an excellent way to frame this issue and shape the debate in your community. The sample op-ed in this section can be tailored to your agency and region, and should be signed by a senior member of your organization.

### **Sample Public Service Announcements**

Public Service Announcement (PSA) scripts for radio broadcast or television can complement publicity generated for bike safety and bicycle helmet use.

### **Sample Radio Commercial Scripts**

Paid or sponsored radio advertising is a quick and cost-effective way to let the public know the importance of bike safety and bicycle helmet use and contribute to changing attitudes.

### **Additional Ways to Involve the Media**

A listing of ideas for use in different media venues (newspaper, television, radio and other).

# Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



## News Media

### What is News?

1. A previously unpublished account of an event
2. What happens to people
3. Anything new learned today
4. Information people need

### Criteria for How the Media Judges the Value of News

- 🚲 *Conflict.* Most reporters spend most of their time covering conflict – whether wars, politics, crime or sports. Conflict is both a contributing and a complicating factor in news. Usually present, it is often hard to understand and hard to describe.
- 🚲 *Human Interest.* An emotional human interest story, especially when it involves children, may have appeal.
- 🚲 *Novelty/Drama.* The unusual makes news. “Firsts” make news. Bizarre makes news. When a dog bites a man, that is not news because it happens so often. But, if a man bites a dog, that is news.
- 🚲 *Impact/Consequence.* How many people an event or idea affects and how seriously it affects them determines its importance as news. So does the extent to which the information may be useful to their audience. Does anybody care?
- 🚲 *Timeliness.* Today’s news may be stale tomorrow. However, some issues of great impact are timeless. So the best time to tell an important story is as soon as possible.
- 🚲 *Prominence.* Names don’t always make news. Still, happenings that involve well-known people or institutions are likely to be interesting even if not important.

- 🚲 *Proximity/Locality.* Usually, the same happening is bigger news if it happens in the media's area than if it occurs 1,000 miles away.

## Friend or Foe?

The media's role is to report the news. However, people would rather the media report their story the way they want it told. The media can be our friends if:

- 🚲 they are kept informed of relevant news;
- 🚲 they are given facts (hard data, dates, names, etc.) by official organization representatives who should always know for sure what the facts are at the time and what they can reveal without hurting others or their cause;
- 🚲 the official organization representatives never lie, especially when they don't know the answer or don't want to reveal the answer. An official caught in a lie makes a better story than the truth.

The media can be our foes if:

- 🚲 their inquiries are not responded to quickly (or at all);
- 🚲 organization representatives miss appointments or provide inaccurate and incomplete information;
- 🚲 they continuously receive irrelevant news from an organization;
- 🚲 they consistently receive "fluff" presented as hard news;
- 🚲 you lie.

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## Media Tips



The bike has always been a favorite American icon for fun and freedom...particularly as we remember childhood. Bike safety and using helmets can be included in this image. Insight into the issue, along with a local angle, will be of interest to your local media. The following tips will help you place your story with media and/or get your Public Service Announcement (PSA) aired by radio stations.

### **The Five Steps to Successful Media Relations**

1. Identify your key messages (What do you want people to know? To do?)
2. Identify your target audiences
3. Simplify and localize the message and make it understandable to the target audience
4. Select several vehicles to carry the message (print, radio and TV)
5. Convey your message frequently and consistently

### **General Tips**

#### **Establishing a Good Working Relationship with the Media**

-  Do your homework. Know who to talk to. Find out the name of the health writer, lifestyles writer or city editor. At the television stations, discover who the assignment editors are and the news directors. Ask them the best way to contact them when you have a story (e.g., phone, fax, e-mail). Each reporter has different preferences.
-  Obtain current media directories from the public library or your local health department.

- 🚲 Spend time educating the media.

Let the reporter know what is going on in this interesting arena which includes public health, transportation, law enforcement, schools, city planning, parks and recreation interests, etc. Provide the reporter with background information on bicycle-related injuries and the role helmets and the knowledge of traffic rules can play in preventing injuries. Share local and statewide statistics to drive your point home.

- 🚲 Position yourself as a resource.

Being knowledgeable, professional and helpful is the best way to maintain a good relationship with a reporter. Anticipate and know how to get the information reporters will be asking for. Be prepared to localize national or statewide statistics with local statistics or anecdotes.

- 🚲 Know how to make that first call.

Make sure that you can present your story idea clearly and succinctly.

- 🚲 Try to get your idea across in the first 30 seconds. Write an outline to help you with your pitch.
- 🚲 When you get the reporter on the phone, ask the reporter if he/she has time to talk. If the reporter is busy, make arrangements to call back another time.
- 🚲 Introduce yourself and your organization and your concern about bicycle-related injuries in your area.
- 🚲 Offer a press release or fact sheet with all your important information and contacts. Be ready to fax the reporter the sheet at the conclusion of your call.

## **Compiling Media Lists**

When compiling a list of your local media outlets, be sure to include both print (newspapers and local magazines) and electronic (television and radio news programs) media. Include culturally specific media markets, too. And don't forget alternative media: magazines and newsletters published by groups such as your local Chamber of Commerce, community service organizations, unions, major employers, health care organizations, and of course, bicycle clubs and organizations. Also, check-out the free newspapers around your community.

## **Sending a Pitch Letter or News Release**

### **Purpose**

- 🚲 The purpose of a pitch letter is to explain to a reporter, editor or news director why he or she would want to do a story on your issue. The purpose of a news release is to generate media interest in a specific event, announcement or new development and to provide some information about it.

### **Target a recipient**

- 🚲 Evaluate your story to determine who would be most interested in covering your story. Stories about bike safety and helmet use can be pitched to many editors or reporters (city editors, business editors, health editors, sports editors and youth editors).
- 🚲 Review your local media sources, look for articles of related interest and note bylines for outreach efforts.
- 🚲 In general, call your local media and find out the name and phone number of the individual in the following positions:

TV	Planning/Assignment Editor
NEWSPAPER	City Desk or Editor
RADIO	Assignment Editor or News Director

However, if you decide that your story would fit better in another section of the newspaper, call the newspaper and confirm the name and title of the appropriate editor or reporter.

### ***Understanding Timing: Event vs. Issue***

Timing your media approach depends on whether you are seeking coverage for an event (news release) or hoping that media will pick up on a story about your issue (pitch letter).

#### **An upcoming event**

If you are notifying the media of an event, send out a news release three or four days before the event. Follow-up with reporters or editors one to two days before the event to confirm whether they will



be attending. Reporters work on a short lead-time, so it is not a good idea to send information about your event weeks in advance.

### **An issue**

If you are pitching a story angle about your issue, send a pitch letter that includes the timing of your follow-up call. For instance, "I will call you on Wednesday to discuss this story idea further." Then, be sure to call when you say you will call. Because your story is not "time sensitive" (it does not have to run at a particular time) it may take weeks or months before you see a story. You should not expect your article to be in the next day's paper or on the evening news.

### **Following-up with the Media**

Following-up with media on the phone is appropriate and often necessary to ensure coverage, but don't hound them. Always avoid calling when you know they are working on a deadline. Mornings are best for both electronic and print. Generally, do not call daily newspapers after 3:00 p.m. and avoid calling weeklies on Thursday afternoon. However, publication days vary. Call the paper to find out what the deadline day is and what is the best day to reach people. Radio and TV deadlines vary, but avoid calling during the half-hour before a major news broadcast begins.

Know your subject matter and be clear and concise when you talk to the reporter, editor or news directors. Be familiar with the media outlet you are calling to pitch. Know what kinds of stories they typically run.

If a reporter calls you, respond immediately. Ask about the reporter's deadline. If you meet a reporter's deadline, you will probably be called again. If the reporter asks you questions you cannot answer, promise that you will find the information and call back promptly.

### **Preparing Spokespeople**

If a reporter is interested in interviewing a spokesperson, you should prepare the spokesperson for questions the reporter might ask. Brainstorm a list of possible questions and discuss answers together before the interview. Write three key messages as brief memorable, "quotable" statements and encourage your spokesperson to practice saying them. Examples of potential key messages are:

- 🚲 “About 900 people, including more than 200 children, are killed annually in bicycle-related incidents nationally, and about 60 percent of these deaths involve a head injury.”
- 🚲 “Research indicates that using a bicycle helmet can reduce the risk of a serious brain injury by up to 85 percent.”

The spokesperson should review these key messages before every interview and repeat them as often as possible during the interview.

## **Placing your PSA**

To submit your PSA to a radio station, contact the station to determine the individual to whom you should send your scripts. At most stations, this is the public affairs director. Also, ask about the station’s PSA requirements, including length and lead-time before writing the script and/or making the PSA.

In addition to sending scripts for a radio personality to read, you can record your PSA on a cassette tape, digital audiotape or reel. First decide if recording your intended PSA will fit within your budget, then check with your local stations to determine which format they prefer.

## **PSAs in Other Languages**

Placing a PSA with a foreign language station is another way to promote bike safety and bicycle helmet use. You should ask three questions before submitting a PSA in another language or sending a script to a station to be translated:

1. Do you want to reach that particular ethnic community?
2. Will it benefit that community to hear the PSA?
3. Is there someone available at your organization who speaks that language to take calls if they come in?

If you answered “No” to any of these questions, it may not be to your or the listener’s benefit to have your PSA broadcast in another language.

If you submit your PSA to a non-English station, contact the station for its PSA requirements. If you buy advertisement time with a radio station, make running your PSAs part of the deal.



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## Interview Tips

### DO

Always be prepared and knowledgeable. Have your agenda for the interview well defined and know your subject matter. Prior to each interview, write a brief summary of the main messages you want to communicate.

Remember that there are differences in media requirements; you can provide more in-depth answers to print reporters, but responses to radio and television reporters must be brief. Television and radio news interviewers are looking for the 10- to 30-second "sound bite."

**Get your main message across by selecting and practicing three points, each stated in a concise, positive, sentence. Repeat it several times during the interview.** Illustrate your point whenever possible with a few brief statistics or interesting real-life anecdotes. Follow with two or three of your other major message points, but don't attempt to make too many points in any one interview.

**Always** tell the truth. Be as direct and concise as possible when answering a reporter's questions.

Position yourself as an expert source; make sure that the reporter knows about your credentials and years of experience. Provide a brief background sheet with this information for the reporter. Spell your name and the name of the organization for him/her.

Be accessible; reporters have constant deadline pressure, so time is always of the essence. Always return their calls promptly, but **try not to do an interview cold**. Always find out what the reporter wants to know and ask what his or her deadline is, his or her name, organizational affiliation and telephone number, and then promise to get back to the reporter with the requested information or spokesperson prior to the deadline.

Use your organization's name whenever possible instead of generic pronouns

such as “we.”

Say “I don’t have the answer now…” and get back to the reporter with additional information if possible. DON’T say “no comment.”

Keep answers as concise and focused as possible, but not so brief as to be uninformative or appear evasive. Avoid one- or two-word responses, but don’t ramble or go off on tangents; you risk having your responses edited out of context. Again, turn the subject towards your three main messages and repeat them.

Keep your audience in mind. Avoid slang or technical jargon that the audience will not understand. Before the interview, ask yourself what the audience does not know about the subject and what is important for them to know. When appropriate, provide people with action steps they can take to prevent injury.

Keep your cool. Do not be ruffled or upset by a reporter’s questions. Keep control of the interview; politely correct misinformation and **NEVER** allow yourself to become defensive. The issue is the real story, don’t make your defensiveness the story instead. For controversial questions that you are not prepared to answer, turn the question into one of your three main messages (i.e., “that’s controversial, but what we can all agree on is: 1.\_\_\_\_\_, 2.\_\_\_\_\_, 3.\_\_\_\_\_”).

## **DON’T**

DON’T assume the interview is over until you and the reporter have actually parted company. Sometimes, a reporter will say, “OK, we’re finished,” and people let their guard down and say something off-hand that later is included in the story.

DON’T give out information that you *think* may be true; it could cause embarrassment if discovered later to be false.

DON’T repeat a reporter’s negative question in your answer. Use positive words with which you feel comfortable.

DON’T try to fill up the silence. When you are finished answering a question, wait and let the reporter ask the next one.

DON'T say anything "off the record." There is no such thing. Anticipate that **anything** you tell a reporter may wind up being printed or broadcast.

**If you don't want to read it or hear it, don't say it.**

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## Sample Pitch Letters

The following pitch letters are designed to help you obtain positive media coverage promoting bike safety and bicycle helmet use in your community. Pitch letters should be written on your agency's letterhead and distributed to local media. This helps to ensure that reporters working on bike safety and helmet use stories have your name as an expert source for facts and information on the issue.

# Sample Pitch Letter 1

## May is Bicycle Safety Month!

[Date]

[Reporter Name/Publication]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Reporter Name]:

The month of May will soon bring us great weather, and it will also bring us National Bicycle Safety Month! That's right! May is the time of year communities all across the country make an effort to raise the awareness of the possible dangers associated with bicycle riding while promoting this great activity!

Bicycling is indeed a growing form of recreation for people of all ages throughout the country, and the month of May is the perfect time to promote safe riding. Safety habits include numerous behaviors such as wearing a helmet properly, riding on the right, or having lights and reflectors on one's bike for night riding.

As Bicycle Safety Month approaches, we must share this important information with our communities to ensure that injuries, disabilities and deaths are prevented.

[Jane Doe] of \_\_\_\_\_ organization (phone \_\_\_\_\_) is a local resource for expert spokespersons to provide local perspectives and statistics for your news coverage on this important issue. Please feel free to call us to arrange interviews or provide you with additional background facts on the issue.

Sincerely,

[Local Contact]

Local statistics in the pitch may encourage the media. Your angle would



depend on the stats -- if they are bad, the community needs improvement! If good, let's keep up the good work!

## Sample Pitch Letter 2

### **School starts in September. Watch out for bike riders!**

[Date]

[Reporter Name/Publication]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Reporter Name]:

Fall is near, and soon kids of all ages will become students again and head back to the classroom. Along with the start of another school year will be the increase of student bicycle riders. Many kids will be traveling to and from school via bicycle.

[Group Name] wants to remind our communities of the importance of safe bicycle riding practices and the use of bicycle helmets. Doing so will help reduce the chance of injury, disability and even death, as result of a bicycle crash.

[Group Name] would also like to remind those traveling to and from work in their automobiles about the presence of morning and afternoon student cyclists and emphasize safe driving. We need to teach kids and parents how to wear bike helmets correctly.

[Jane Doe] of \_\_\_\_\_ organization (phone \_\_\_\_\_) is a local resource for expert spokespersons to provide information on local issues and statistics for your news coverage on this important issue. Please feel free to call us to arrange interviews or provide you with additional background facts on the issue.

Sincerely,

[Local Contact]

## Sample Pitch Letter 3

**"Safe Routes to School for our children promote physical fitness as well as injury prevention."**

[Date]

[Reporter Name/Publication]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Reporter Name]:

Motor vehicles are the most common killers of individuals 1-44 years of age, and are a significant cause of death for people of all ages. In [year here] there were [number here] motor-vehicle-related deaths in [state here]. Traffic injuries also account for the majority of cases of paraplegia and quadriplegia and are the single leading cause of severe brain injury and severe facial lacerations and fractures.

Society's response to this tragedy is to deny our children the security and freedom to move safely in their neighborhoods that we were afforded as children, a double tragedy. The number of children who ride bikes and walk to school has plummeted. Children are driven everywhere or are forced to relocate their activities from streets, alleyways, and front porches, to backyards, recreation centers, and many times to a place in front of the television set.

An innovative program is encouraging children to get moving once again while providing a sense of safety. This program, Safe Routes to School, provides numerous benefits including:

- ◆ improved safety and convenience for vulnerable road users, particularly children;
- ◆ reduced number and severity of traffic crashes;
- ◆ provision of space for non-traffic activities;
- ◆ implementation of improvements in public transportation;
- ◆ an increase in physical activity.

[Jane Doe] of \_\_\_\_\_ organization (phone \_\_\_\_\_) is a local resource for expert spokespersons to provide for information on the local Safe Routes to School program. Please feel free to call us to arrange interviews or provide you with additional background information on this program.

Sincerely,

[Local Contact]

## Sample Pitch Letter 4

### **Holiday happiness includes helmets!**

[Date]

[Reporter Name/Publication]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Reporter Name]:

If a bicycle is on a parent's list for his/her child this holiday season, that present should include a bicycle helmet as well. Wearing a bicycle helmet not only can save a child's life; it can prevent serious injuries and brain damage.

Scientific evidence has demonstrated that even mild brain injury can result in learning difficulties. More severe brain injuries can result in permanent mental and physical problems. Wearing a bicycle helmet can protect a child's head from injuries that cause brain damage.

Wearing a bicycle helmet is the single, most effective way for a bicyclist to prevent head injury, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Helmets have been shown to reduce the risk of serious brain injury by as much as 85 percent.

California law requires all children under the age of 18 to wear a helmet whenever riding a bicycle. In 200\_, bicycle-related injuries killed \_\_\_\_ children and caused \_\_\_\_\_ hospitalizations among Californians under 18 years of age. Cars were involved in about one in three of these injuries. The rest happened when the rider fell from the bike.

In order to provide maximum protection, a bike helmet must work properly. Bike shops and local health departments can demonstrate how to properly fit a helmet. Helmets are to be worn no higher than two-finger widths above the eyebrows and must be fastened under the chin. Helmets worn higher on the head expose the entire front part of the brain to injury.

We must share this information with parents as they prepare for this holiday season. [Jane Doe] of \_\_\_\_\_ organization (phone \_\_\_\_\_) is a local resource for expert spokespersons to provide local perspectives and statistics for your news coverage on this important issue. Please feel free to call us to arrange interviews or provide you with additional background facts on the issue.

Sincerely,

[Local Contact]

## Sample Pitch Letter 5

### **School is out. Play safely!**

[Date]

[Reporter Name/Publication]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Reporter Name]:

It is that time of year when school comes to an end and kids look forward to their summer vacation. No longer will they have to worry about assignments, homework and tests. Now their days are filled with summer fun. There is nothing wrong with having fun as long as the activity is done in a safe manner.

With the summer heat on its way, many kids will find themselves riding their bikes anywhere and everywhere. This is why it is important to let our communities know and promote the importance of safe bicycle riding and the use of bicycle helmets. The simple knowledge and practice of proper bicycle safety can significantly reduce and even prevent needless injuries, disabilities and death.

We must share this information with our communities especially at this time of the year when kids are out and about having fun. [Jane Doe] of \_\_\_\_\_ organization (phone \_\_\_\_\_) is a local resource for expert spokespersons to provide on local perspectives and statistics for your news coverage on this important issue. Please feel free to call us to arrange interviews or provide you with additional background facts on the issue.

Sincerely,

[Local Contact]

## Sample Pitch Letter 6

### How can you tell if your child's helmet is safe to use?

[Date]

[Reporter Name/Publication]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

Dear [Reporter Name]:

Before March 1999, there was no national standard regarding the manufacture of bicycle helmets. Consumers were understandably confused about the quality and function of the different types of helmets. The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission created the new Safety Standard for all bicycle helmets manufactured or sold in the United States to help alleviate this confusion. This new standard is extremely important. As bicycling grows in popularity as a recreational activity and as a means of transportation for adults and children, injuries continue to take a toll on cyclists. Each year, crashes involving bicyclists cause approximately 900 deaths, 23,000 hospital admissions, 580,000 emergency room visits and 1.2 million visits to physician offices and clinics in the United States.

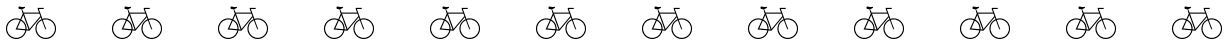
What are the requirements for bicycle helmet manufacturers and how do these minimum requirements protect consumers? [Jane Doe] of \_\_\_\_\_ organization (phone \_\_\_\_\_) is a local resource for expert spokespersons to provide local perspectives, minimum quality standards and statistics for your news coverage on this important issue. Please feel free to call him or her to arrange interviews or provide you with additional background facts on the issue.

Sincerely,

[Local Contact]



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## Sample Story Angles

Reporter interest and positive publicity for the implementation of bicycle helmet use in your community can be secured with careful planning and creativity. The following are some examples of story ideas that can be pitched to local media. You can discuss several different story ideas with reporters with whom you have regular contact or who often cover bicycle-related issues. Another way to suggest your story idea to a reporter is through a pitch letter as described in the previous chapter.

**Showcase a successful case of a bicycle helmet protecting someone from potential injury.** Encourage a reporter to profile an individual or child who has avoided serious injury through the use of a bicycle helmet. Have the reporter write a story that gives a vivid description of the cause and dynamics of the injury and the possible outcome that may have resulted if a bicycle helmet were not used. This story angle can be pitched to all people. However, it will especially affect parents and raise their awareness of the reality and possible dangers surrounding their children.

**Explore the relevance and consequences of injuries due to not wearing a bicycle helmet.** According to the California Department of Health Services, the state of California has 12 percent of the nation's population, but 18 percent of fatalities. From 199\_-200\_, \_\_\_\_\_ people have been severely injured and \_\_\_\_ killed in bicycle-related crashes. In 200\_, children made up \_\_\_\_ percent of California's serious bicycle injuries. These statistics associated with not using a bicycle helmet can be dramatically reduced with simple behavior changes toward helmet use. You can suggest an interview with someone who suffers from negative health consequences due to failure of using a bicycle helmet. Stories from actual individuals affected by bicycle injuries create a better sense of reality for these injuries actually happening, and can influence positive change in one's behavior toward bicycle helmet use. A possible source of volunteers for such an interview can be reached at local trauma and rehabilitation centers as well as educational programs such as "THINK FIRST."

**Show the enormous cost of hospital bills for care and rehabilitation.**

According to the California Department of Health Services/State and Local Injury Control Section, in 1997, California had serious head injuries from bicycle crashes resulting in 1,089 hospital admissions. The hospital bills for these bicyclists amounted to over \$30 million, an average of \$27,716 per incident. Medi-Cal paid \$28.7 million of these costs. Other government programs paid \$18.9 million of these costs. Individual costs for acute care and rehabilitation from bicycle crashes may exceed one million dollars! Provide a story about the actual cost of hospital bills and other relevant major expenses for an individual. Emphasize that these dramatic costs and the injury could have been reduced and/or prevented with a simple investment in a bicycle helmet.

**Use the month of September to attract attention to bicycle helmet use.**

When school starts in September, many kids start to ride bikes to and from school. As kids try to make it to school, adults rush to make it to work on time, creating a potential danger for bicycle injuries to occur. Pitch a letter that acknowledges this danger to your communities' youth. Let the reporters know that children made up 25 percent of California's serious bicycle injuries in 1994. The reporter can play a major role in helping to reduce this percentage. This is especially relevant these days as after-school programs continue to expand beyond the school bus hours.

**Focus on the health effects of not using a bicycle helmet.** Nationwide, approximately 900 people, including more than 200 children, are killed annually in bicycle-related incidents, and about 60 percent of these deaths involve a serious brain injury. Research also indicates that a helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by up to 85 percent. Pitch a story telling the consequences of riding a bike without a helmet.

**Showcase the special needs of children from a developmental perspective in learning to bike safely in their community.** Safe biking requires a blending of physical and cognitive skills. Children are often physically able to ride a tricycle or bicycle before they are able to understand their role in traffic. Pitch a story that explains how children's development influences their ability to be safe in traffic. For instance, children under the age of 12 often do not have the physical and cognitive skills to judge traffic and should ride on sidewalks. City ordinances generally define where bicycles may be ridden. Is your community addressing this important

developmental issue?

**Showcase what drivers need to know to share the road with cyclists.**

Ask reporters to write articles about the importance of safe driving. Highlight common errors such as failure to check for bicyclists when turning right or left, opening car doors in front of approaching cyclists, and passing too closely.

**Showcase what cyclists need to know to share the road with motor vehicles.** Encourage cycling instructors to advertise their classes. Work with groups that sponsor bicycle rodeos and community education.

**Showcase local community activities related to bicycle riding, bicycle safety, and bicycles as a form of exercise and a fun family activity.**

Many communities hold Bike Commute Week activities in May to promote bicycles as a form of cheap, fun and convenient form of transportation. Many activities are family-oriented. Contact the California Bicycle Coalition for additional information.

**Focus on the dangers of traffic jams that occur in the parking lots of local elementary schools.** Many times parents drive their children short distances to school instead of encouraging them to ride their bicycles or walk. Encourage parents to ride or walk to school with their children. It is a great physical activity for both parent and child.

**Find an elementary school that has a high percentage of bicycle riders.** What is it that makes this school a bicycle riding school? Is it safe neighborhoods? Secure bicycle parking? Parent volunteers who ride to school with the youngsters? What are school policies about riding bikes and using helmets?

**Find individuals in the community who are concerned that fewer children ride their bicycles or walk to school.** Who is working with

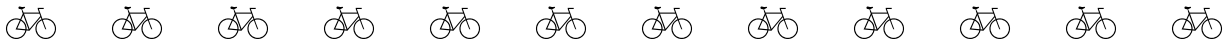
schools and parents to change this disturbing trend? What is happening on this issue in elementary schools? Junior Highs? Senior Highs?

**Emphasize the value of bike-riding as physical activity for children.**

How are pediatricians, schools, youth programs and parents working to move children off the couch and away from computer games?

**Emphasize how bicycle travel can reduce air pollution.** Another option is to tie in bicycle riding with Earth Day. Emphasize that bicycle riding helps the earth by reducing pollution and helps the rider by increasing healthy activities. Include information on the rise of childhood asthma.

# Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



## Sample Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed)

*"But I can't afford a bicycle helmet." "My child only rides on paved streets, so it's safe." "My child won't wear a bicycle helmet and I can't watch him all of the time."* There are many excuses for not protecting your child on a bicycle, but none of them are valid when it comes to your child's life. The facts are that the majority of bicycle-related injuries treated in emergency rooms involved children under fifteen and they are the leading cause of death and injury in children 5-14. Helmets have been shown to decrease the risk of head injury by 85 percent.

Through the efforts of (name of groups), FREE bicycle helmets and education are currently available to families in need in (state or community). The bicycle helmets come in all sizes – toddler, small, medium, and large – and are available at (locations). Families wanting more information about the bicycle helmets should call (phone).

Many parents believe that bicycles are a very safe form of fun and exercise for their children. However, a bicycle is not a toy. It is a form of transportation. It is a vehicle and should be treated as such. In 1997, 4,850 Californians sustained bicycle-related injuries resulting in hospitalization or death. Of these, 135 people were killed, representing 18% of the nation's bicycle-related deaths. Serious *brain* injuries occurred in 1,089 of these people amounting to a cost of over \$30 million dollars.

Children should learn to use bicycle helmets from the time they ride their first bicycle. Parents should demonstrate the value of bicycle helmets by wearing a helmet every time they ride. Children imitate what they see, and if they see their parents wearing their helmets as well, they will be more likely to wear their own helmets. Some will argue that it is a matter of "personal freedom" to ride a bicycle without wearing a bicycle helmet. But the fact is, that in our society, personal freedoms stop where other people are injured or killed. This is especially true when it comes to children's safety.

Protecting your child is a parental responsibility. Use your head, wear a

helmet and teach your children to wear their helmets!

# Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



## Sample Radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs)

It is imperative for your community to understand the importance of wearing bicycle helmets. The following sample PSAs can be distributed to your local radio stations to help raise awareness about bicycle helmets. They should be read by a radio personality, health professional or other appropriate spokesperson.

*Note: PSAs are aired by radio stations at no cost and are often difficult to place or may be aired at odd hours; air time for radio commercials may be purchased.*

### **10-Second Spot**

So your teen won't wear a bike helmet? Remind him or her that wearing a helmet correctly every time is responsible behavior...the same kind needed to drive the family car at 16.

### **10-Second Spot**

So your child won't wear a bicycle helmet? Remind him or her that wearing a helmet correctly every time is responsible behavior...the same kind needed to earn that new privilege he has been asking for.

### **15-Second Spot**

It's a fact. Approximately 900 people, including more than 200 children, are killed annually in bicycle related incidents nationwide, and about 60 percent of these deaths involve a head injury. The good news: (pause) research indicates that a helmet can reduce the risk of serious brain injury by 85 percent. Use your head. Use a helmet.

A message brought to you by (name of local organization).



### **15-20 Second Spot**

So you've heard that 60 percent of all bicycle deaths involve a head injury, and now you want to buy a helmet. The problem is, you don't know what kind of helmet to buy. As of March 1999, all helmets are required to meet a standard set by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission that ensures adequate protection of the head. Now you know. So what are you waiting for? Get your helmet today!

A message brought to you by (name of local organization).

### **15-20 Second Spot**

You've bought the helmet for your kids, and now it's time to enjoy the beautiful weather and start riding those bikes! But your child won't wear the helmet. So ride with your kids and wear your helmet too! Kids tend to model what their parents do. So if you want your children to practice good bicycle safety, make sure you practice what you teach!

A message brought to you by (name of local organization).

### **30 Second Spot**

Hi, I'm Officer [NAME] of the [STATE/LOCAL] police department. Too often I've seen the tragedy of children seriously injured or killed in bicycle crashes simply because they weren't wearing a bicycle helmet. I've seen the devastating effect it has on families and on the community. We can prevent these senseless deaths. That's why law enforcement across [STATE/CITY] are out, right now, enforcing [STATE's] bicycle helmet laws. No warnings. No excuses. So do your job, or I'll do mine. Make sure your children wear their helmet each and every time they ride their bikes. There's just too much to lose.

A message brought to you by (name of local organization).

### **30 Second Spot**

Hi, I'm Officer [NAME] of the [STATE/LOCAL] police department with a safety tip we can all live with. It's simple...make sure your children wear their bicycle helmets. Every year I see too many children seriously injured or killed in bicycle crashes. In fact, bicycle crashes are the leading cause of death and injuries among children 5-14. I'm working hard to prevent these senseless

deaths...but I need your help. There's just too much to lose.

A message brought to you by (name of local organization)

### **30 Second Spot**

What protects children, saves lives and saves taxpayers millions? Wearing a bicycle helmet. In fact, if every child in [STATE] just put on a bicycle helmet, we would save the lives of more than [XXX] children next year alone. Plus it would save taxpayers [\$XX] in health care and insurance costs. So make sure your children wear their helmets and support stronger enforcement of [STATE'S] bicycle helmet law. There's just too much to lose.

A message brought to you by (name of local organization)

# Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



## Sample Radio Commercial Scripts

The following suggested 60-second radio commercial script has been prepared for local programs to produce for placement in your community. Paid radio advertising can be produced quickly and is often a very cost-effective tool to educate the public. Often, a public radio station will develop and record for you.

Make sure your radio spot is tailored to the station's listener profile before spending the money. Ask for the station's demographics: age, ethnicities, economic groups, etc. represented in the listening audience.

*Sample Radio Commercial 1*

### Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



## Additional Ways To Involve The Media

### Newspaper

#### News Section

Identify local experts who could be interviewed by reporters [e.g., bike club members, law enforcement, personnel, bike patrol officers, city and county administrators promoting the bike friendly nature of the community].

#### Letters to the Editor injuries and and Opinion Section

Write to the editors about bicycle head  
  
how bicycle helmets can significantly help  
prevent and/or reduce the severity of injuries.  
Explain to them what can be done in your

community to raise awareness and change behavior regarding helmet use.

Advertising Supplement  
reproducing

Talk to your local newspaper about  
and/or including material from this kit as a  
public service announcement in their  
advertising supplement.

Sunday Flyers

Produce an insert for the Sunday paper  
(coupon/ "how to info") promoting bicycle  
helmet use.

Lifestyle Section

Write a story about a family whose members have  
started to use bicycle helmets. Show that there  
are helmets available for all types and ages of  
people. Include information on the types of  
helmets available and places they can be  
purchased. Explain how some youth  
organizations conduct helmet campaigns to take  
advantage of bulk purchase pricing.

## **Television**

### **Local News**

Create an activity or an event promoting bicycle helmet safety and invite local stations to cover your event.

Partner with local stations to produce PSAs which provide tips on how to properly fit a bicycle helmet as well as statistics on head injuries related to bicycle falls.

Enlist the support of local television weather forecasters to promote your event.

Develop local bulletin board spots for cable networks

## **Radio**

### **All Available Stations**

Offer to provide representatives for media interviews and/or community affairs programs on local radio stations.

Distribute "ready-made" PSAs that promote bicycle helmet use.

## **Other**

### **Local Events**

Plan an event and coordinate with other local events, such as a fall festival, county fair, state fair or an open market to have broad-based exposure.

### **Public Officials**

Ask your local Representative or Senator to give a statement of support or send a letter that can be published in the newspaper about a story on bicycle helmet use.

### **Local Celebrities**

Contact local TV, radio and sports personalities who would be willing to lend their support, speak or advertise and promote bicycle helmet use.

# Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



## Getting the Message Out

The following fact sheets are included for your use:

**Why Bicycle Helmets are Important.** Provides the most current California data available related to bicycle injuries, hospitalizations, and fatalities.

**The Cost of One Bicycle Related Head Injury.** Outlines the cost of medical treatment for one family after their son suffered from a head injury while riding his bicycle.

**How to Fit a Helmet Flyer.** An easy, step-by-step guide that instructs users on how to properly fit a bicycle helmet in Spanish and English.

**State Legislative Fact Sheet.** Gives brief synopsis of key facts, status of legislation regarding helmet laws, cost savings from wearing bicycle helmets, information sources, and a list of states with bicycle helmet laws.

## Why Bicycle Helmets are Important

In 1997, Californians sustained 4,850 bicycle-related injuries resulting in hospitalization or death. Tragically, 135 people in California were killed in bicycle collisions, representing 18 percent of the nation's bicycle-related deaths. These numbers are expected to increase as the population grows and as bicycling becomes a more popular form of transportation.

The State of California:

- 🚲 is home to an estimated 33 million people, the largest population of any state. Californians also own 20 million bicycles—about 30% of the bicycles in the United States. Both the state population and the number of bicyclists are rapidly increasing.
- 🚲 has 22 million registered motor vehicles with which bicyclists most contend.
- 🚲 has about 9.5 million residents 18 years and over who reported riding a bicycle in 1997, according to a California-wide telephone survey.
- 🚲 has 12% of the nation's population but 18% of bicycling fatalities.
- 🚲 has 9.3 million children under the age of 18 (28% of the population in 1997).
- 🚲 has 4.2 million children between the ages of 5 - 12 years of age (13% of the population in 1997) who are considered to be at greatest risk for bicycle head injuries.
  - 🚲 These children were victims of 22% of all serious bicycle injuries in 1997.
  - 🚲 Adults (20 years and over) have the largest portion of all bicycle injuries – 60% in 1997.
- 🚲 has hospital bills for 1997 of \$101.2 million, and average \$21,171 per victim. The average hospital stay was 4 days.
  - 🚲 The Medi-Cal portion of these bills were \$28.7 million (28%), and the bills for other government payers amounted to \$18.9 million (19%). All government payers, therefore, paid nearly one-half (47%) of hospitalized bicycle injuries.
  - 🚲 1,089 people suffered serious brain injuries requiring hospitalization, with bills amounting to \$30.2 million, and average of \$27,716 per person. The average stay was 5 days.
- 🚲 can expect lifetime costs to care for a traumatically brain injured child to exceed \$4.6 million.
- 🚲 even moderate brain injury can result in problems with comprehension, memory, and speed of thinking.
- 🚲 has a mild climate and long bicycling seasons, increasing the risk of injury.

**Wearing a Bicycle Helmet Reduces the Risk of Head Injury by 85%**

# **The Cost of One Bicycle Related Head Injury**

## **One Family's Experience**

### **The Injury**

On October 25, 1986 at 4:00 p.m., a 14-year-old male was struck by a hit and run driver while riding his bicycle in his Texas hometown. The driver was never caught. This teenager sustained 18 skull fractures, a severe closed head injury, and was in a coma for four months. He was hospitalized for a total of 10 months. After discharge, he required 24-hour licensed home nursing care for 2 ½ years. He presently requires attendant services. He was not wearing a bicycle helmet.

### **The Costs**

#### **1. Acute Care and Rehabilitation (for 8 years, 1986-1994)** **\$1,176,000**

Emergency and Intensive Care	\$ 159,000
Brain Injury Rehabilitation	352,000
Home Care	315,000
Outpatient therapies, surgeries, general medicine	350,000

*Private Medical Coverage – Lifetime Maximum \$1,200,000*

#### **2. Other Major Expenses (for 8 years, 1986-1994)**                      **\$** **167,200**

Insurance Deductibles	\$ 28,000
Handicapped Van/Lift	32,000
Home Modifications	22,000
Transportation/Gasoline/Parking	15,200
(Doctor Visits, Therapies, School)	
Other Expenses	70,000
Supplies, Equipment, Braces, Medications	
Wheelchair (Supplies, Cushions, Repairs)	
Special Activities	
(Head Injury Conferences, Support Group activities, etc.)	

**After 8 years, total estimated costs**  
**\$1,343,200**



**counting!**

Source: Texas Department of Health, Injury Prevention Control Program

**... and**

**"How to Fit a Helmet Flyer" – Insert Here**

**“How to Fit a Helmet Flyer” – Insert Here**

**"State Legislative Fact Sheet" – Insert Here**

# Bicycle Media Outreach Kit



## Where to find the Latest Statistics

### **NATIONAL**

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street, South West  
Washington, D.C. 20590  
(202) 366-9836

Insurance Institute for Highway Safety  
1005 North Glebe Road  
Arlington, VA 22201  
(703) 247-1500

National Bicycle Safety Network  
[www.cdc.gov/ncipc/bikes](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/bikes)

Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute  
4611 Seventh Street South  
Arlington, VA 22204-1419  
(703) 486-0100  
[www.bhsi.org](http://www.bhsi.org)

"THINK FIRST" Trauma/Rehabilitation Center  
22 South Washington Street  
Park Ridge, IL 60068  
Toll Free: (800) Think56  
E-Mail: [thinkfirst@aans.org](mailto:thinkfirst@aans.org)

### **STATE**

California Office of Traffic Safety  
7000 Franklin Boulevard, Suite 440  
Sacramento, CA 95823

(916) 262-0990

California Department of Health Services  
Epidemiology and Prevention for Injury Control  
611 North Seventh Street, Suite C  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 323-3611

California Bicycle Coalition  
P.O. Box 162848  
Sacramento, CA 95816-2848  
(916): 446-7558  
E-Mail: [cbc@jps.net](mailto:cbc@jps.net)  
<http://www.jps.net/cbc>

## **LOCAL**

Consult Local Telephone Directories for:

Local City or County Health Departments

Local Police, Sheriff's, or Highway Patrol Departments

County Emergency Medical Services Agencies